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General Assembly

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Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Letter dated 23 November 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of a note verbale of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus dated 19 November 1998 addressed to the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations (see annex). The note refers to the regrettable refusal by the authorities of the United States to grant entry visas to deputies of the Belarusian Parliament, who were planning to take part in the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly as members of the official delegation of Belarus.

I should be grateful if you could distribute the present letter and its annex as a document of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

(Signed) Alyaksandr **Sychou**
Ambassador

98-36975 (E) 271198

Annex

Note verbale dated 19 November 1998 from the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations and, with reference to the statement made by Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations, at the 195th meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, on 16 November 1998, has the honour to state the following.

The Permanent Mission of Belarus wishes to draw the attention of the United States Mission to the regrettable fact that the Embassy of the United States of America in the Republic of Belarus refused to grant American entry visas to deputies of the National Assembly (Parliament) of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Nikolai Cherginets and Mr. Aleksandr Kozyr, who had planned to take part, as members of the official delegation of Belarus, in the work of the fifty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly on the question relating to cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, scheduled for consideration on 28 October 1998.

On 8 October 1998 the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus sent a note to the Embassy of the United States of America in Minsk with a request that it issue an American entry visa for Mr. Cherginets, valid for nine days starting from 23 October 1998. On 19 October a similar request was made by a corresponding note of the Ministry regarding the entry visa for Mr. Kozyr. The Ministry, on a number of occasions, enquired at the Embassy about the progress in the issuance of visas. The Embassy, however, continually responded that the documents were still being processed. Since by 28 October the visas had not yet been issued and it had become evident that the participation of the Belarus delegation in the work of the General Assembly had already been disrupted, the Secretariat of the National Assembly requested the Embassy to return the passports of the two delegates. The passports were returned on that day without the visas.

As a result of actions taken by the authorities of the United States, the members of the Belarusian parliamentary delegation were not able to take part in the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, which seriously hampered the overall work of the official delegation of Belarus at the session.

The Belarusian side considers that the above unilateral measures taken without any justification by the authorities of the United States constitute a serious violation of the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, as well as other universally recognized norms of international law.

The above incident is even more regrettable in the light of the fact that throughout more than 50 years of Belarus' membership in the United Nations, as one of the founding Member States of the Organization, members of the Belarusian delegation have never been denied entry visas to the United States to participate in the meetings of the United Nations. The incident sets a negative precedent, the repercussions of which may hinder the work of the Belarusian delegation to the United Nations.

In view of the above, the Belarusian side calls upon the authorities of the United States to strictly abide by the provisions of the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations and to conduct an in-depth investigation into the circumstances of the above incident.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations would very much appreciate receiving an early response of the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations to this request.

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17 December 1998

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Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Letter dated 14 December 1998 from the Minister Counsellor for Host Country Affairs of the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Enclosed please find the text of a note verbale dated 14 December 1998 from the United States Mission to the United Nations addressed to the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations, responding to the latter's note verbale dated 19 November 1998 in relation to visas for two deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

(Signed) Robert C. **Moller**
Minister Counsellor for Host Country Affairs

98-39849 (E) 181298

Annex

Note verbale dated 14 December 1998 from the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations

The United States Mission to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations and acknowledges receipt of the latter's note verbale dated 19 November 1998 in relation to visas for two deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus (A/AC.154/323).

The two deputies of the National Assembly, Mr. Nikolai Cherginets and Mr. Aleksandr Kozyr, applied for visas to participate in an Interparliamentary Union event at the United Nations General Assembly. They were invited by the Secretary-General of the Interparliamentary Union, Mr. Anders Johnson, rather than by the United Nations. The United States does not have obligations under its Headquarters Agreement with the United Nations regarding events convened by the Interparliamentary Union.

If the aim of the Government of Belarus was to include the two deputies on its official delegation to the fifty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly, that intention was not made clear at the time of visa application in Minsk. Paragraph 4 of the note verbale also makes a distinction between the official delegation of Belarus and the members of the Belarusian parliamentary delegation.

The United States takes its responsibility as host country to the United Nations seriously, and is mindful of the provisions of the United Nations Headquarters Agreement. The Permanent Mission's note acknowledges that throughout its 50-plus years of membership in the United Nations, no member of the delegation of the Government of Belarus to the United Nations has been denied a visa by the host country. The United States believes this record remains intact.